THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Defence has not chartered Jet Airlines to ferry Army troops from locations in Ladakh. However, pursuant to a trial flight to Thoise in Ladakh on 30-7-2003 by Jet Airways, discussions between officials of Ministry of Civil Aviation and Ministry of Defence are in progress.

(c) and (d) No such proposal is with the Government.

Enhancing the fire power of infantry units

1570. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of steps taken specially in enhancing the fire-power, reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities of all Infantry Units in India;

(b) whether our Army Infantry Units specially on our Borders are equipped with human and arms detecting sensors, battlefield surveillance radars, hand held thermals, various types of rocket launchers and automatic grenade launchers etc.;

(c) if so, details of those items which are imported from foreign countries and names of such foreign countries;

(d) if so, whether Government has made any effort to manufacture those items in our country; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (e) Modernisation of Infantry has been accorded the highest priority in the current Army Plan. The Army Infantry units on borders have been equipped with modern and effective fire power systems like 84mm Rocket Launcher MK-III; Automatic Grenade Launcher AGS-30; Multi Grenade Launcher (MGL); Anti Material Rifle (AMR) and Flame Thrower RPO-A (FT). The reconnaissance and surveillance equipment include state of the art. equipment like Hand Held Thermal Imagers, Battle Field Surveillance Radar (Short Range) *i.e.* BFSR (SR); High Resolution Binoculars and Unattended Ground Sensors. All these items have been imported from various foreign countries like Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Israel, France, Germany and USA. The equipment is procured only after

observing the prescribed acquisition procedure.

2. Wherever required, and possible transfer of technology is also taken to manufacture such equipment in India. The Transfer of Technology (ToT) has been taken for Hand Held Thermal Imagers and these are now being manufactured indigeniously by M/s Bharat Electronics Ltd. The ToT for Unattended Ground Sensors has been taken by M/s Nelco, a Tata Company, without any expenditure by Government of India. Battle Field Surveillance Radar (SR) was earlier imported from Israel but now has been developed by DRDO and technology has been passed on to M/s Bharat Electronics Ltd. In such case, there is varying degrees of indigenisation achieved.

3. In all the cases of procurements for Infantry, deficiencies are being made up and older generation weapons and equipment are being replaced by modern weapons and equipments.

4. Technology for Armaments like 84mm Rocket Launcher, Automatic Grenade Launcher, Multi Grenade Launcher, Anti Material Rifle and High Resolution Binocular is also proposed to be taken from the original manufacturers from whom Arms, Ammunition and equipments have been procured after trial evaluations and found acceptable by the Armed forces.

Acquisition of F-16 Falcons

1571. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that IAF pilots have recently been sent to US to fly F-16 Falcons;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that Pakistan has acquired the Falcon aircraft; and

(c) if so, what efforts are being made by India to acquire the same or similar aircraft for India?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES):(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Pakistan acquired F-16 Falcon aircraft during early 1980s. Indian Air Force is adequately equipped to counter any threat arising out of this acquisition.